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**The Creative Evolution of Jewish American Writers
in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty First Centuries**

Summary of Dissertation

THE GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is devoted to the works of contemporary Jewish American writers in the context of multicultural American literature.

The problem of ethnic within national is one of the most urgent in the current world literary process. Today American literature is studied from the perspective of Multiculturalism that supposes the coexistence of different cultural traditions within national. Therefore, it implies the awareness and understanding of the authors of different racial, ethnic, gender and other types of identity. These types of identity are reflected in fiction in the works created in the US in English and belonging to national literature.

Speaking of the national literature in this dissertation, we mean the US literature, as this terminology is common for most Western and domestic scholars and literary critics. Literatures created by the representatives of different races, ethnic groups, religious confessions, social groups, and etc. equally coexist within the boundaries of the US national literature. The common features of the authors are their belonging to the American nation and the English language, both defining the particular mentality.

Multicultural studies in the US literature, social sciences, cultural studies and philosophy have become a tradition and do not provoke any debate. Therefore, today the focus is no longer on the existence of a particular racial or ethnic literature, but their development and evolution, the appearance of new trends and tendencies in the reflection of ethnic identity.

For the writers of Jewish origin the question of identity has always been particularly relevant due to historical, social and political reasons including the absence of the Jewish state and certain territory for many centuries, language differences, assimilation and the attempts to overcome it. Today we can not speak about Jewish literature as an absolutely independent phenomenon, even when we mean Israeli literature, as it consists of many components, including the works of authors writing in the second official language — Arabic, and other languages, including Russian. In addition, Israeli and Hebrew literatures do not include the

works of Jewish authors outside the country. Consequently, the definition of Jewish literature is still not fully articulated, and we accept such definitions as “Jewish Literature of the United States” and “Jewish American Literature” as well as “Russian Jewish Literature”, and etc. It is necessary to mention, that in Russian Literary Studies it is more common to put national identity on the first place, and ethnic on the second.

Jewish American literature has its own characteristics, it occupies a special position in comparison with other ethnic literatures – Chicanos, Asian-American, Irish American, etc. These features are caused, first of all, by historical factors: Jewish emigration to the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries; anti-Semitic policy, which became public in some countries where Jews lived; World War II and the Holocaust; establishment of the State of Israel. The flourishing of Jewish American literature in the twentieth century started due to the fact that in America Jews were not persecuted and could use all the freedoms provided by the state to its citizens. Consequently, Jewish culture integrated into American culture very quickly, and became an important part of it.

In the twentieth century, American literary mainstream included Jewish authors, while the representatives of other ethnic literatures remained marginal. In the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first centuries the boundaries of mainstream blurred, and Jewish American literature reached a new level of development. That is why we speculate on its evolution. The need for understanding this process defines the choice of **the theme and the object of the study**.

The dissertation deals with the works of Jewish American literature created during several decades. It allows us to trace the evolution of Jewish literature in the United States, the creative evolution of the writers and the succession of generations. The work covers the period of the twentieth and early twenty first centuries and, accordingly, two generations of writers: the senior (the authors, who were born to immigrant parents, and who witnessed the World War II and the Holocaust), and the junior (the descendants of Jewish immigrants who were born in the 1960–70s and began their literary career in 1980–2000s).

Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud are the most well-known classics of Jewish American literature of the twentieth century. Their works are mentioned in the dissertation, but they are not the object of our analysis. We consider these authors to be literary precursors of those who entered literature in the 60s and later. Although both, Saul Bellow, a Nobel laureate, and Bernard Malamud, whose name is given to a prestigious American literary prize in the field of short fiction, continued to work at the end of the century, they are organically linked with the previous generation of American writers and the certain historical period. Their creative work was under the greatest influence of the events of the first half of the twentieth century. They made great contribution to the development of modern Jewish literature in the US, and became literary guiding lines for those whose works are under our analyses.

Some of the most prominent contemporary Jewish American authors began their career in the period of change of generations in American literature, in the 60s. They are Chaim Potok (1929–2002), Cynthia Ozick (b. 1928), Philip Roth (b. 1933), Grace Paley (1922–2007), Joseph Heller (1923–1999), Woody Allen (b. 1935). We also pay attention to some certain aspects of aspects in the works of Norman Mailer's (1923–2007) and Paul Auster's (b. 1947), though they are not regarded as purely Jewish writers. The junior generation is represented in the dissertation by the works of Michael Chabon (b. 1963), Allegra Goodman (b. 1967), Jonathan Safran Foer (b. 1977) and Nicole Krauss (b. 1974).

The relevance of the research is connected with the necessity of understanding contemporary Jewish literature as a significant body and an important segment of national literature of the United States, and tracing its evolution. Studies of different segments of multicultural literature have already become the main approach in the researches concerning contemporary American literature. This tendency goes back to the 60s. Since Jewish literature has begun to play one of the main roles in the whole literary process in the US of the twentieth century, the problems connected with it are relevant and urgent today.

Jewish culture is a part of the US culture, especially in big cities, and Jewish literature has never been regarded as marginal, unlike other ethnic literatures at the

initial stage of development of Multiculturalism. For example, the first writers of Chinese or Mexican origin had to overcome negative stereotypes in order to become significant for national literature. Jewish writers were in a better position, and this fact led to a rapid and vigorous development of Jewish literature, its popularity among readers, international recognition and a large number of researches.

In Russian literary studies and criticism Jewish literature was not recognized for many years, while in the US writers belonging to Jewish segment of multicultural literature were the key figures of the national literary process.

Almost all the authors whose works we analyze here, are the winners of national awards, including the Pulitzer prize. Their works have been translated into many languages including Russian.

The goal of this work is to create the complete picture of the development of contemporary Jewish American literature. According to this goal we have the following **tasks**:

- to present Jewish American literature as a phenomenon playing an important role in the formation of contemporary multicultural American literature;
- to define the criteria of ascription of an author and his works to Jewish American literature of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries;
- to select representatives of different generations of contemporary Jewish American literature, and characterize their creative work in connection with historical, social and cultural factors;
- to consider the influence of Jewish tradition on the works of contemporary Jewish American authors;
- to define the role of ethnic component in the artistic world of contemporary Jewish American writers;
- to consider the influence of national ideology on contemporary Jewish American fiction.

Novels and short stories written by Jewish American authors in the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first centuries have become **the object of this research**.

The creative evolution of Jewish American authors of the period regarded from the perspective of multicultural paradigm has become **the subject of the research**.

The following works of fiction have become **the material for the research**: Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967, Russian translation 2013); Philip Roth's novels *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969, Russian translations 1994 and 2003), *The Breast* (1972, Russian translation 1993), *My Life As a Man* (1974, Russian translation 2002), *The Professor of Desire* (1977, Russian translation 1994), *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), *The Counterlife* (1986, Russian translation 2010), *The Facts. A Novelist's Autobiography* (1988), *American Pastoral* (1997, Russian translation 2007), *I Married a Communist* (1998, Russian translation 2007), *The Plot Against America* (2004, Russian translation 2008), *Exit Ghost* (2007, Russian translation 2010), and some essays; Joseph Heller's novels *Good as Gold* (1979, Russian translation, 1998) and *God Knows* (1984, Russian translation 2002); Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies* (2002); Cynthia Ozick's short stories and essays of the 70–90s, published in Russian in 2010–2012; Grace Paley's short stories of 70–80s, published in Russian in 2012; Woody Allen's short stories of 70–2000s, published in Russian in 2002–2014; Allegra Goodman's story collection *The Family Markowitz* (1996, Russian translation, 2013); Norman Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997, Russian translation, 2001); Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything is Illuminated* (2002, Russian translation 2005); Michael Chabon's novels *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000, Russian translation 2006) and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007, Russian translation 2008); Nicole Krauss's novels *The History of Love* (2005, Russian translation 2011) and *Great House* (2010, Russian translation 2013).

Due to the selected aspect of the analysis, we refer to the same works in different chapters and paragraphs of the dissertation, discovering the characteristics features of national and ethnic identity and tracing the creative evolution of writers belonging to different generations.

The methodological basis for the research is a combination of different approaches developed by Literary Studies and relating to consideration of the

historical and literary process in general and the analysis of individual phenomena in literature. We use comparative historical, comparative typological, cultural, historical, biographical and social methods of analysis. We also use data related to the other fields of researches, such as Cultural Studies, History and Sociology.

The degree of elaboration of the problem. In contemporary American literary criticism there is a large number of works on Jewish literature devoted both to the general trends of its development and particular authors and their works.

Jewish literature began to attract the attention of American researchers in the 60s. In the 70s it was regarded as an independent and original phenomenon within national literature. 80–2000s in the Western world were particularly rich in the researches analyzing both general trends in Jewish American literature and the works of particular authors. Saul Bellow and Isaac Bashevis Singer who were awarded Nobel Prizes in 1976 and 1978 attracted more attention to Jewish fiction. For several decades, they, as well as Bernard Malamud, were the most prominent and significant authors. Although the new generation of writers did not appear in that period, the 80s became the rise of Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley and Woody Allen whose creativity has not reduced for at least the further two decades, and at the beginning of the new millennium. At the same time, in early twenty first century, we may speak not only about a new generation of Jewish writers, but also about new trends in Jewish American literature and the rethinking of traditions that takes place in the works of those who came into literature scene in the late 90s and early 2000s. Thus, there is a natural division of writers into the senior the junior generations.

The beginning of the new millennium is the most productive time for both the writers the researchers. One of the most significant events related to Jewish literature of this period was the publication of *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature* in 2000. J. Chametzky, a well-known expert in the field of Jewish literature, was its editor. Although the anthology is not an academic publication, its appearance is important as it determines the place of the Jewish segment in the multicultural literature of the USA.

There are a lot of works on Jewish literature in the US, and their number has

increased in the last two decades. Jewish literature, perhaps, is the most studied of all ethnic literatures. There are academic researches giving general characterization to it as a phenomenon, such as A. Chapman's *Jewish-American Literature* (1974), S. Girgus's *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and The American Idea* (1984), A. Furman's *Contemporary Jewish American Writers and the Multicultural Dilemma* (2001), J. Lambert's *American Jewish Fiction* (2009), and others. Particular attention in the Western American studies is paid to the Holocaust and its interpretation in fiction. The perception of the tragedy in Jewish American literature has its own characteristic features. American Jews were not directly affected by the tragedy, and this led to a special kind of psychological trauma, that becomes the object of portrayal in fiction. Among the most significant works devoted to the Holocaust fiction are the following: D.S. Bilik's *Immigrant-Survivors: Post-Holocaust Consciousness in Recent Jewish American Fiction* (1981), A. Berger's *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (1985), G. Cronin and A. Berger's *Jewish American and Holocaust Literature: Representation in the Postmodern World* (2004). One of the most interesting books is the work of Czech researcher S. Kolar *Seven Responses to the Holocaust in American Fiction* (2004), where the author analyses the works of authors of different ethnic backgrounds, including Jewish.

The researchers also deal with various issues presented in the Jewish American literature in different periods, its problems and poetics, such as the problem of alienation in E.K. Bothwell's *Alienation in the Jewish American Novel of the Sixties* (1980), the specificity of Jewish humor in J.P. Steed's collection of essays *Joke-making Jews / jokes making Jews: Essays on humor and identity in American Jewish fiction* (2004). The theme of alienation, Jewish humorous tradition and its reflection in fiction are also the subjects of research in a number of academic works. These aspects, along with the theme of the Holocaust, have become the most popular and productive for the researchers in the field of Jewish literature.

Among the works focusing on the Jewish literature as a part of national literary process of the United States, the certain place is occupied by those having educational

function, including textbooks and manuals. They are intended for those who study Jewish literature as a part of university courses or independently. In 2003, Cambridge University Press published *Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature* in its series of literary guides. It was edited by the well-known experts in the field of contemporary Jewish American fiction H. Wirth-Nesher and M.P. Kramer. It traces the entire history of Jewish literature in the United States. The chapters are dedicated to the prose and poetry in Yiddish, Hebrew, and, of course, in English. The authors also address the problem of alienation and exile, the Holocaust and issues connected with authors' identity. Such "guides" also exist on the works of Chaim Potok, Philip Roth and Cynthia Ozick as the most prominent contemporary Jewish American authors.

Comparative studies become important for Jewish American fiction next to the analysis of its general trends, themes and problems within Multiculturalism. The study of various segments within multicultural literature, especially racial and ethnic, is urgent in the current situation. Therefore, the comparison of Jewish American literature with other ethnic and racial literatures is productive for the scholars and it contributes to the understanding of their specific features. The significant research in this field is presented in D.J. Franco's book *Ethnic American Literature: Comparing Chicano, Jewish, and African American Writing*, published in 2009. It has become one of the major theoretical bases for the dissertation. The author begins his analysis with the historical, geographical and political factors that influenced the development of various ethnic and racial cultures of the United States finding overall trends and identifying similarities. Particular attention is paid to traumatic experience that largely determine the perspective of literature: slavery for African Americans, the US aggression against Mexico and the problem of illegal immigration for Chicanos, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust for Jews, etc. Although the book is written at the beginning of the twenty first century, D.J. Franco refers mainly to the works of Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth. The most recent author to whom he refers is Tony Kushner, a playwright, whereas today we can speak about the writers of the junior generation fully representing the Jewish literature of the United States on a global

level.

Works comparing Jewish American and Israeli literature occupy a special place among the comparative ones. Having common roots these two Jewish literatures disperse in many aspects. The question of identity is the main subject of the book *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature* (2001) edited by E.M. Budick. The proclamation of the State of Israel and the appearance of Israeli national literature changed the critics' and scholars' perception of Jewish literature. Jewish literature became divided into Israeli and non-Israeli or the Diaspora literature as it is created outside the Jewish State. Consequently, Jewish American literature today is a part of the national literature in the United States, and Israeli is considered to be national literature by itself.

American literature is a unique phenomenon. Ethnic literatures exist and develop within its space, and the representatives of each of them have border mentality, combining different cultural traditions. If Israeli literature can be called national and ethnic at the same time, the Jewish literature of the United States is an ethnic component of national. Though Israeli literature has recently appeared, it has already reached a very high level, and comparing it with Jewish American literature as the most developed and prominent in the Diaspora appears to be productive for researchers.

In addition to general researches on Jewish American literature and comparative works, there is a large number of works that analyze the creative evolution of particular authors, first of all, these are the works devoted to Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Chaim Potok, Joseph Heller and Grace Paley. As for the writers of the junior generation, the most studied author today is Jonathan Safran Foer, whose novels are in the focus of attention in several articles.

Though there are a lot of works on Jewish American literature in Western literary studies and criticism, there is a lack of those that could trace the evolution of this ethnic segment of multicultural literature of the US. The continuity of generations in contemporary Jewish American fiction also hasn't become the subject

of academic research yet. The works of young authors, being popular among the readers and well-known all over the world, are analyzed rarely and only by a few scholars in a few publications.

As for literary criticism in Russia and the former Soviet Union, there are a few works devoted to multicultural American literature. Jewish American literature, in contrast to other ethnic literatures (African American, Asian American, Chicano, Native American), is still on the periphery of the literary criticism in our country. It is mentioned in a number of works, such as professor Tlostanova's monograph. Professor Gilenson, a prominent scholar, devoted one paragraph of his *History of the US Literature* to Jewish writers. He drew attention to the recognized classics – Saul Bellow, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth and Joseph Heller. Although this is a manual addressing philological students, the presence of Jewish literature there on a par with African American, Chicano, Asian American, Native American, etc. is an important factor. In recent years, a Ukrainian scholar professor Vysotska often refers to contemporary Jewish American authors in her articles.

Several dissertations devoted to particular authors have appeared in our country in recent years, as, for example, our dissertation *Ethic Peculiarities of Philip Roth's Novels*, defended in 2006; the monograph with the same title was published in 2009, and it still remains the only serious works on Philip Roth's fiction in our country. There are also monographs on Saul Bellow by professor Bronich, on Bernard Malamud by I. Beltser and the dissertation on Joseph Heller by A. Salimov. The famous Russian literary critic, one of the leading specialists in American literature professor Zverev was the author of a number of reviews and articles about Jewish American writers. His review of the first translation of Woody Allen's short stories was the first critical response to the literary work of a famous comedian in our country. In recent years Ukrainian and Russian scholars published several articles on Jonathan Safran Foer's and Michael Chabon's novels. Chaim Potok, Allegra Goodman and Nicole Krauss haven't become the subjects of academic research in Russia and yet, while Ukrainian scholars professor Vysotska and professor Denisova analyzed their novels and stories in their works.

It should be noted, that the works of young writers of the last decade have already been translated into Russian. Some works of fiction recognized as modern classics in the US, have also been translated recently, as, for example, Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* in 2013. The translations of Woody Allen's short stories have also become available for Russian readers in 2013 and 2014. These facts show that the problems raised in the works of contemporary Jewish American writers are not very far from the Russian readers' interests, and there are some common grounds especially concerning the problems of national and ethnic identity for Russian and American readers.

The novelty of the research. This dissertation is the first in our country dealing with Jewish American literature as a unity and one of the most important ethnic segments of contemporary American literature. African American, Chicano, Native American, Chinese American literatures are studied in Russia, while Jewish American though being one of the most extensive and advanced, remains unexplored. At the same time, the fiction of the authors is well-known to Russian readers. Some of the books became familiar due to their screen adaptations (such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*). In this connection, it was necessary to give a general description of the evolution of Jewish American literature in the historical and literary context, and trace the succession of different generations of writers.

The dissertation presents the general characterization of the process of development and evolution of contemporary Jewish American literature within multicultural paradigm. We deal with ethnic peculiarities and their reflection in fiction. We introduce several new names to contemporary Russian literary studies.

There is a sufficient number of literary works on Jewish literature and works on individual authors' creative evolution in the US and other Western countries, researchers do not address the succession of generations, developing trends and rethinking of traditions rooted in the works of the twentieth century classics. This aspect is fundamental in this work, as we are the first tracing the creative evolution of the authors at the turn of the centuries, highlighting the two generations of authors and analyzing continuity and transformation of Jewish American literary tradition.

Statements suggested for the defense:

1. The period of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries signifies a new stage in the development of Jewish American literature. We find it possible to distinguish senior and junior generations of writers. We notice the continuity of traditions and their reinterpretation in connection with the historical situation and the new social and cultural phenomena.

2. Jewish writers rethink and redefine ethnic stereotypes associated with religion, Jewish way of life and traditions that are transformed on the background of contemporary American reality.

3. Contemporary Jewish writers give their own interpretations to the US national ideology and its constituents, such as American Dream and a self-made man, as well as national symbols and national character.

4. The Holocaust is one of the most important themes in contemporary Jewish American literature. However, American writers show the tragic events not from the standpoint of the victims, but in terms of sympathetic contemporaries and witnesses. The senior generation of writers portrays the tragedy mostly in a realistic manner close to documentary prose, whereas the junior generation prone to postmodernist interpretations of the same events.

5. The theme of creative writing together with the image of the Jewish writer is a form of self-reflection for the authors, their answer to the question “What does it mean to be a Jewish writer in the United States?” This theme relates to the problem of definition of literary canon and authorities in contemporary American literature in general, and in Jewish American literature in particular.

6. A special type of humor appears in the works of contemporary Jewish American authors. It is the result of synthesis of Jewish and American literary humorous traditions.

The theoretical significance of the dissertation is in filling the gaps related to the study of Jewish literature in the Russian American Studies. Jewish literature which is a significant body of the US literature in the twentieth and the twenty first centuries. Thus, this research provides a more complete picture of the development of

multiculturalism in American literature.

The practical significance of the dissertation lies in the fact that we introduce a significant body of material that is important for understanding the contemporary literary process in the USA. It can be used in teaching courses on American literature, as well as special courses on Multiculturalism. The study may be useful for specialists in related fields of American studies, for example, Cultural Studies and History.

The compliance of the dissertation with the passport of academic specialty. The dissertation is carried out in accordance with the following paragraphs of the passport of academic specialty 10.01.03 – World Literature (Literature of the USA):

1. The periodization of the world literary process; the problem of stages in the evolution of Eastern and Western literatures; stages of development of the literatures of particular countries.

2. The problems of historical and cultural context, social and psychological conditions for creation the outstanding works of art.

3. History and typology of literary movements, forms of artistic consciousness, genres, styles, sustainable patterns of prose, poetry, drama and journalism and their reflection in the works of particular authors.

The work approbation. The key points of the dissertation are reflected in the monographs, articles and papers presented at different conferences. The author participated in more than twenty international conferences, including the conferences of the European Association for American Studies in Dublin, Ireland, and the Hague, Netherlands; International Zverev readings in the Russian State Humanitarian University in Moscow; International Conferences of Belorussian Association of American Studies in Minsk; the International Conference in Southampton, the UK; conferences on American Literary Studies in Zadar, Croatia, and Florence, Italy; the International Philological Conferences in St. Petersburg; the International conferences *Synthesis of Fiction and Non-Fiction in Literature and Art* and *National Myth in Literature and Culture* at Kazan University; and a number of national and regional conferences.

The structure of the dissertation. The work consists of the Introduction, four chapters, the Conclusion and the List of References that includes 389 items of fiction and literary criticism. More than 150 of them are in English.

THE CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Introduction presents the justifications of the relevance and novelty of the dissertation, defines its goals and objectives, methodological framework, the object and the subject. It also indicates its theoretical and practical significance, and provides the statements suggested for the defense.

The first chapter *The Place of Jewish Literature in the US Literary Process* consists of two paragraphs. They are devoted to the general issues of the Jewish literature existence as one of the ethnic segments of the multicultural American literature. **The first paragraph** *Ethnic Component of American Multiculturalism* traces the main stages of development of the cultural paradigm of the American "melting pot" to the formation of the concept of multiculturalism that implies the equal coexistence of different racial, ethnic, gender, social and other elements.

It is noted that since the foundation of the United States of America as a nation, its culture was in opposition to the European one. America seemed more open and spacious, as well as ready to accept new trends and percept everything progressive. This influenced the formation of national identity. Racial and ethnic diversity, multi-ethnic population, the phenomenon of American Dream, the uneven development of the regions and the Frontier still determine American mentality. These factors led to the specific development of American literature in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

It is pointed out that the development of Multiculturalism in literature is under the influence of historical processes in the US in the twentieth and the twenty first centuries. They include immigration, the consequences of the Second World War, the youth riots of the 60s, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Concerning literature, Multiculturalism involves racial and ethnic diversity,

existing within the national paradigm and based on national ideology. The majority of the researches of the contemporary US literature are based on multicultural perspective, as we see in the works of such scholars as D.J. Franco, E.M. Badik, N. Vysotska, M. Tlostanova and others. The particular attention is paid to the study of creative evolution of the authors belonging to different racial and ethnic groups. The certain number of racial and ethnic segments within multicultural literature have been distinguished since the 60s of the twentieth century.

Racial and ethnic literatures in the United States are closely related to the history and the social changes in the society, that is why different literatures has different ways of development and evolution. For example, African American literature became significant in the first half of the twentieth century, while Native American literature is on the way to its peak today. The same happens to the ethnic literatures: Jewish one is long existing, it has already gained worldwide recognition, while Chicanos is one of the most promising today. Indian, Arabic and some other Asian American literatures are on the stage of their development.

This paragraph also deals with the terminological specificity in determining the ethnic literatures in English and Russian. For example, in the United States the generally accepted tradition is to put the ethnicity of the writer on the first place, and nationality – on the second (eg. Chinese American author, Jewish American author, etc.). In Russian, there are different ways of defining the national and ethnic aspects, but commonly nationality is put before the ethnicity (eg. American Chinese literature, American Jewish literature).

Thus, the first paragraph gives theoretical basis for the further analysis of ethnic specificity of the Jewish component in contemporary multicultural American literature.

The second paragraph of the first chapter entitled *The Main Patterns of Development of Jewish Literature in the USA*, deals with the analyses of Jewish culture in America and, as a result, the formation of the phenomenon of Jewish American literature.

We speculate on the historical prerequisites influencing the formation of

modern Jewish culture, such as discrimination of Jews in Eastern Europe, in particular in the Russian Empire, the existence of the Jewish pale, the pogroms, riots, mass emigration in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, "the Jewish processes", World War II and the Holocaust.

The main emphasis is placed on formation and functioning of ethnic stereotypes as the major factors defining specific character of Jewish literature: the most widespread stereotypic images are presented.

It is noted that though being Jewish was connected only with the religion for many centuries, today Judaism is not the forming and dominating factor of the Jewish identity. His fact is reflected in fiction.

Further we speculate on the criteria of referring a writer to Jewish literature. The concept "Jewish literature" still appears as ambiguous and debatable, it is connected with historical factors, people's migration since the ancient times, prosecutions, the absence of the state up to the middle of the twentieth century, a number of subethnic groups, and the language diversity. The conclusion is drawn, that it is impossible to distinguish universal criterion of belonging to Jewish literature, and it is necessary to speak about the complex of cultural codes, mentality and ethnic self-identification. It is claimed that the author can be identified as a Jewish writer not only by origin or the reflection of the Jewish perspective in his works, but also by a certain vision of these problems. It is a look "from within", the perspective defined by mentality and formed by Jewish culture and background. Thus, the Jewish component is an important aspect for the works of fiction. It signifies themes and conflicts, and influences the poetics. In such situation, the existence of the Jewish characters is inevitable. Thus, if we deprive such works of their Jewish component, their plots, systems of characters, poetics, subjects and perspectives will collapse.

These conclusions allow us to outline the circle of authors who are identified as Jewish American, including those who can be referred to Jewish literature only partially. The latest have a few works that can be regarded as belonging to the Jewish segment of American literature, but in general, these authors can not be called Jewish

according to their mentality and the specificity of their works.

The main subjects, conflicts and characteristic features of modern Jewish literature of the USA are defined according to the conclusions made in this paragraph. Thus, Jewish American literature has a number of peculiar features connected with the problems of identity, border consciousness, and specific mentality. These features provides its uniqueness, and separates it from other Jewish literatures.

The second chapter is entitled *American and Jewish in the World of the Authors of the Late Twenty and the Early Twenty First Centuries*. It consists of three paragraphs. They develop the theoretical provisions that were put forward in the first chapter of the dissertation.

The first paragraph, *Overcoming Jewish Stereotypes*, deals with the stereotypes about Jews existing in European culture for centuries, and how they are transformed in the works of Jewish American writers. The authors use stereotypes in presenting certain themes and raising certain problems, connected mainly with Jewish American identity. Overcoming and breaking stereotypes lead to the creation of new ones based on American reality more than on the historical factors and religious traditions. Among the most widespread themes of Jewish American fiction we distinguish the themes of family and religion, and they are under the influence of contemporary American realities.

Chaim Potok, Philip Roth, Joseph Heller, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley and Allegra Goodman in their works emphasize that the stereotypes about Jews are created by Jews as well as non-Jews. They become the dominating form of reflection of the Jewishness in fiction. The following images are typical for these authors: a Hasidic Jew, a rabbi, a Jewish mother and an unlucky father, an immigrant, and etc.

Rethinking and revision of stereotypes in fiction brings the authors to the new level of interpretation of Jewish life in the USA. It, in turn, stimulates a new stage in the development of Jewish American literature as a segment of national literature at the turn of the centuries and the millennia.

In the second paragraph of the second chapter, *National Ideology in the Works of Jewish Writers*, we focus our attention on American national history,

traditions and values as they are interpreted and transformed in Jewish fiction of the US. We analyze Philip Roth's novels of his *American Trilogy*, Joseph Heller's *Good As Gold* Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Cavalier and Clay*, short stories of Cynthia Ozick and Grace Paley.

Through the descriptions of everyday routine of the Jewish family and the life of American Jewish quarters the authors show how American realities penetrate the lives of Jewish immigrants and their children. Typical American things, such as baseball and fast food, become symbols of the American way of life, which Jews want to reach overcoming immigrant complexes and stereotypes.

From everyday realities the authors pass to the national phenomena also having symbolic meanings. A special attention is paid to the American Dream. The ironical concept "American Pastoral" introduced by Philip Roth in his novel may be applied to the works of the other authors, when they present transformation of this phenomenon on the examples of lives of American Jews in the middle and late twentieth century.

The third paragraph of the second chapter is entitled *The Interpretation of the Holocaust in the Works of Jewish American Authors*.

Firstly, we speculate on the role of document in the Holocaust fiction and non-fiction, giving Anne Frank's diary as the most famous and important example of the document influencing fiction in the US as well as in the whole Western world.

We trace different ways of interpretation of the Holocaust theme by different generations of Jewish American writers. The first way may be defined as "perspective from outside", typical for the authors who are the contemporaries of the tragic events. Being Americans they saw them from aside, but did not become the victims. This led to realizing the responsibility for further restoration of Jewish life and culture along with the survivor guilt. The traumatic experience and the phenomenon of collective memory is a typical theme for the authors of the junior generation, those who are mostly grandchildren of the contemporaries of the tragic events. Both generations include document into fiction; and this can be regarded as a part of national tradition of American literature.

Further in the paragraph we speculate on the genre variety in the Holocaust literature, analyzing genre characteristics of the “concentration camp novel” on the example of Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* as a realistic story, the alternative history in Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*, postmodernist combination of genres in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* and Nicole Krauss's novels, as well as comic elements and the use of mass culture stereotypes in Michale Chabon's novels.

The authors use different artistic means to show the Holocaust as an embodiment of Jewish history and identity that replaced the religion in the twentieth century after the war. Before the tragedy Judaism was the uniting factor for Jews of the whole world, despite differences in languages, mentality and the way of life. After World War II it is replaced by collective memory of the tragedy that became common for all the Jews even if they were far from the Nazi Germany and occupied countries.

Jewish American writers express a specific perspective of the Holocaust not from the position of its victims, but as witnesses looking from aside, and at the same time, taking the tragedy as their own. In some cases this approach provides more objective evaluations in the interpretation of the tragedy. It especially concerns the writers of the junior generation. Postmodernism annihilated almost all the bans and taboos in fiction opening new ways of interpretations and presentations of the events and images. Thus, the scope of the tragedy is not underestimated. On the opposite, it becomes more obvious. The tragedy appears as the factor of the collective memory transferred to the generations of children and grandchildren of its witnesses.

Chapter three of the dissertation is entitled *Jewish Writer in America*; it consists of three paragraphs and has an introduction, where we give the outline of the problems raised in the paragraphs: the problem of writer's identity that correlates with the image of the writer, both fictional and real; the problem of literary cannon, and some other aspects. It is emphasized that the existence of Jewish literature within multicultural American literature raises the question “What does it mean to be a Jewish writer in the USA?”

Creation of writers images is a distinctive feature of Jewish American

literature. There are two types of personages: fictional authors, who have autobiographical features; and real writers, who appear mainly in non-fictional works, but sometimes in fiction as well.

In the first paragraph of the third chapter, *Evolution of the Image of a Jewish Writer*, we trace the process of development of literary images in the Jewish literature of the USA. We emphasize that the tradition of creation of images of Jewish writers goes from Jewish literary classics (first of all, Sholem Aleichem), and continues to develop in the late twentieth and the early twenty first centuries.

Joseph Heller, Jonathan Safran Foer, Cynthia Ozick, Nicole Krauss and Michael Chabon create different types writers images. In the course of our analyses it becomes obvious that the process of formation and evolution of a creative personality is a usual subject of portrayal for the writers. This theme often appears together with the theme of ethnic identity. Thus, the creation of Jewish American writers images may be regarded as a method of self-reflection. Each hero meets certain criteria: he should not only realize himself as a Jew (sometimes this understanding happens not at once but while overcoming internal contradictions or under the influence of circumstances), he should reflect his ethnic identity in his works. Connections with history, search of roots and Jewish identity become necessary conditions of formation of a Jewish writer and his creative evolution. However, all the personages are Americans, and their American experience plays an important role in their formation as personalities and writers.

The second paragraph of the third chapter, *The Problem of Canon and Jewish Literary Tradition in Philip Roth's and Cynthia Ozick's Works*, is devoted to the most significant contemporary Jewish American writers of the senior generation.

It is noted that defining the canon for Jewish literature remains a complicated problem, as there is no unified literary space created by common language or national identity. At the same time, there exists a Jewish discourse based on a specific world vision created by ethnic identity. It provides a special approach to the Jewish subject and perspective. The authors, therefore, are in search of a model of a Jewish writer, and it becomes the main issue in a number of works of Philip Roth and Cynthia

Ozick.

Cynthia Ozick uses publicist genres, as in the essays *The Impossibility of Being Kafka*, *Who Owns Anne Frank?*, *Isaak Babel and the Identity Question* and the Introduction to the Complete Works of Isaac Babel. Philip Roth refers to the same writers, but mostly stays in the boundaries of fiction, as in his novels *The Professor of Desire*, *The Breast*, *The Ghost Writer*, *My Life As a Man*, and an essay *Looking at Kafka*.

For both, Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth, the image of a Jewish writer first of all is connected with the question of self-identification. Being contemporary American authors and writing in English, they regard ethnic origin as an important factor, and choose the writers with complicated hybrid identity as models for Jewish authors: Franz Kafka, Isaac Babel and Anne Frank.

The third paragraph of the third chapter is entitled *The Image of the Jewish American Writer in Philip Roth's Works*. The theme of the evolution of a Jewish author became the major one for Philip Roth in 1970–2000. He created vivid and complete images of writers in a number of books that form two cycles: David Kepesh novels and Nathan Zuckerman books. Both characters are autobiographical, but in different degree. Devoting three novels to Kepesh the author only mentions his Jewish roots but doesn't focus his attention on ethnic aspects. Zuckerman books, on the opposite, are focused on the questions of ethnic identity and Jewishness.

Nathan Zuckerman is Philip Roth's "second self", and he becomes the protagonist in several novels. They are independent in plot structure, style and form of narration, but they can form a cycle if we put them in the chronological order according to the events described. The author shows the whole professional life of the personage, the development of his career in connection with the formation and realization of his Jewish identity in American literature.

The creation of a literary image of a writer becomes the form of self-reflection. Thus, the authors use various methods: they take the facts of their own lives as a basis for the creation of autobiographical characters; they analyze biographies and works of famous authors and transfer their images to art and publicist works. This allows them

to consider problems of a writer's identity together with ethnic identity that leads to raising the question of the model of a Jewish author.

Chapter four of the dissertation is entitled *Humor as the Reflection of Ethnic Identity in Fiction*. It consists of three paragraphs, and is devoted to the comic elements in the works of Jewish American authors as the most important aspects of their poetics.

The first paragraph, *Jewish Humorous Tradition in the Works of Jewish American Writers*, traces the transformation of the tradition of "laughter through tears" from classics (including Yiddish authors) to modern American writers. It is emphasized that literary Jewish humor is closely connected with folklore and a Jewish joke. Its main feature is the combination of wit and bitter irony. In the past, the humor became the way of overcoming the terrible reality Jews had to face.

As for centuries Jews lived in Diaspora in different parts of the world, their humor gained the features peculiar to comic tradition of the country of their inhabitation. It absorbed the surrounding national culture together with its stereotypes.

American writers of the late twentieth century adopt the main characteristics of the humor found in classical Jewish literature, adding specific features of American mentality, national values and stereotypes to it. A special kind of humor transforming into irony and satire is typical to Chaim Potok, Joseph Heller, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick and Grace Paley, who mostly fit into realistic tradition and reflect the life of American Jews and their integration into the national culture. Comic elements in their works appear as a result of the synthesis of Jewish and American national traditions of humor. On the one hand, it is the presence of "laughter through tears", sad and touching irony causing sympathy; on the other, – the rough frankness peculiar to American folklore and literary "wild" humor going back to Mark Twain.

The second paragraph of chapter four, *Poetics of Absurd in Woody Allen's Short Stories*, is completely devoted to the literary works of the famous American comedian. Formally, he belongs to the senior generation of modern writers, however, he presents the third generation of Jewish immigrants, and his mentality is far from the that of European Jews. Thus, Woody Allen occupies an intermediate position

between the two generations of Jewish American writers. His perspective of the Jewish American life is a combination of immigrant consciousness and the typical features of American national paradigm. His literary works may be ascribed partially to Realism or to Postmodernism as aesthetic systems, they are very close to American black humor.

Woody Allen's short stories are characterized by a special type of absurd humor. He presents American reality as strange, chaotic, irrational, and therefore, ridiculous: the causal connections are broken, the events and characters can not be analyzed from the point of view of common sense, absurd is presented as wisdom, and vice versa. The plots are improbable; sometimes there appear wizards and magicians transferring heroes to the world generated by their imagination. The interaction of real and imaginary worlds becomes a typical motif in Woody Allen's books and films.

We analyze the elements of poetics along with the theme and problems typical for the author: the image of New York and its typical inhabitant defined by the writer as a "city neuritic", unexpected turns of the plot of the short stories, hyperboles, absurdity, parody, and etc.

On the one hand, Woody Allen raises the same serious problems, as other Jewish American writers of his generation. On the other, most often only the beginnings of his stories look more or less seriously, and in the process of the plot development everything turns into the farce that seems inevitable. The author forces his reader to look at any situation with irony. Woody Allen presents this irony as a peculiar protective mechanism helping to overcome alienation in the American society. Thus, the principle of "laughter through tears" as a main line of the Jewish humor and the way of overcoming fears is realized in his short stories.

In the third paragraph of chapter four, *Postmodernist Tragic Farce in Jonathan Safran Foer's and Michael Chabon's Novels*, we analyze the novels of two significant authors belonging to junior generation, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* and Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* and *Yiddish Policemen's Union*, from the postmodernist perspective. Both authors use

“carnival” laughter (according to M. Bakhtin's terminology), combining obviously tragic and absolutely comic features and black humor that breaks the usual taboos. Postmodernist perceptive allows the authors to use comic means while describing tragic events, such as the Holocaust. We put Jonathan Safran Foer's and Michael Chabon's novels in one row not only because they both are contemporary Jewish American writers, but because they use similar means, remaining individuals at the same time. Variety of genres, intertextuality, playing with stereotypes of mass culture, fragments in narration, and other postmodernist artistic means are used by both authors to transform comic narration into tragic. Thus, they give postmodernist interpretation of the events of Jewish and American history.

We make the conclusion, that Jewish comic tradition transforms in the works of Jewish American writers of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. It began with traditional Jewish humor based on folklore, and gained the features of American national comic tradition. As a result, we trace how it appears in the works of new authors who combine it with the elements of postmodernist aesthetics giving new interpretations to familiar themes and problems, rethinking Jewish history and interpreting the realities of the new millennium.

The main results of the research are presented in **the Conclusion**. It is noted that the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries become the ascent period in Jewish American literature. It was developing actively throughout the last century, and got a special status among other ethnic segments of multicultural literature of the USA. The reflection of Jewish mentality, reconsideration and overcoming of national and ethnic stereotypes and the appearance of a special Jewish American identity makes this literature the unique phenomenon.

Contemporary Jewish American authors have complicated hybrid identity. They all were born in the USA and represent the second or third generations of immigrants, that is why their mentality is typically American with all national stereotypes. At the same time, Jewish traditions and stereotypes transferred from the European ancestors who emigrated to the USA, have a strong impact on their world view. This influence is stronger for those who are closer to immigrants, the writers

belonging to the senior generation, who entered American literature in the 60s.

Ideological and thematic aspects become the main issues in Jewish American literature of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Chaim Potok, Philip Roth, Joseph Heller, Cynthia Ozick and Grace Paley break Jewish stereotypes of the past concerning mostly the image of a religious Jew, a rabbi, and also some traits of character which were usually ascribed to Jewish characters in fiction. They also focus their attention on the overcoming of Jewish isolation and alienation, first of all, with the help of humor, irony and grotesque. At the same time, they create the new Jewish stereotypes, mainly concerning family and religion. They are based both on Jewish and American mentality and involve the realities of Jewish American life.

The Holocaust theme is typical for all Jewish writers. It has a special interpretation in the works of American authors. The representatives of the senior generation, who were the contemporaries of the tragic events, show them "from outside". Jews of the USA were not the victims of Nazism, therefore, they consider the events from the position of witnesses. At the same time, they realize their connection with the tragedy and responsibility for the further reconstruction and preservation of Jewish moral values.

The writers of the junior generation are remote from the Holocaust events due to their age, they were not its contemporaries, and perceive the tragedy through the stories of the previous generations, documents and papers already open, and also fiction based on them. Therefore, the Holocaust in their interpretations appears as the mythologized history, the myth of the twentieth century. Though the tragic essence is not reduced, but becomes even stronger, when it is expressed by means of postmodernist poetics.

The creation of images of Jewish writers becomes one of the characteristic features of modern Jewish American literature. It leads to raising the question of defining the literary canon and the model of a Jewish author. American Jewish writers select such models among the authors with complex identity. They are Franz Kafka and Isaac Babel. Anne Frank is placed in one row with them; she is represented more as a talented author than the most famous Holocaust victim and the symbol of the

Jewish tragedy. The Holocaust makes her personality even more tragic as she could not fully realize her great literary gift.

Transformation of Jewish comic tradition of "laughter through tears" becomes a peculiar feature of poetics. American writers combines it with national humor, and as the result, we observe the synthesis of two traditions and a special type of comedy, sad and touching, and at the same time, grotesque and absurd.

Thus, Jewish American literature being a part of national multicultural literature of the USA, should be regarded as a unique phenomenon. It differs from other Jewish literatures, because it is the result of synthesis of the East European Jewish tradition and characteristic features of American literature.

Jewish American literature had been developing throughout the whole twentieth century, and at the beginning of the twenty first it has become one of the most striking examples of manifestation of ethnic specificity as a part of national identity. Two generations of Jewish American writers of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries work within different aesthetic systems. The representatives of the senior generation, such as Chaim Potok, Grace Paley and Cynthia Ozick, create realistic prose. The views and styles of Joseph Heller and Philip Roth, who belong to the same generation, have been changing throughout their literary career, they involve both realistic and postmodernist means in their works. Woody Allen's short stories occupy the intermediate position from the point of view of style and poetics in this classification according to generations. Michael Chabon, Jonathan Safran Foer and Nicole Krauss represent Postmodernism when they make mass and intellectual literature closer to each other.